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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000049

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AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [NI](#) [KCRM](#) [KDEM](#)
SUBJECT: MEND SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCES END OF CEASEFIRE

REF: 08 LAGOS 375

CLASSIFIED BY: Blair, Donna, CG, State, CG Lagos; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Allegedly speaking for the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), self-identified spokesperson "Jomo Gbomo" announced January 30 the end of MEND's October 25, 2009, cease-fire. Contacts with close ties to the militants claimed that the statement represented the intentions of "a group" within MEND but denied the involvement of any significant ex-militant commander, calling Jomo Gbomo a "laptop militant trying to cause confusion." On the same day as the announcement, Shell's Trans Ramos pipeline ruptured, however, Shell denied any militant involvement in the incident. Although the exact identity of Jomo Gbomo remains a mystery, little doubt remains that he is closely associated with or may be Henry Okah himself. The extent to which Okah can command and control the key militant leaders such as "Tompolo," "Boyloaf" or "Ateke Tom" remains dubious. Post believes the MEND announcement was an effort to redirect lagging attention to the Niger Delta rather than a portent of imminent violence.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) In a press release issued January 30, self-identified MEND spokesperson "Jomo Gbomo" announced the end of the fractured organization's October 25, 2009 unilateral cease-fire. Jomo Gbomo justified the action by the GON's alleged failure to adequately address the grievances of Niger Delta inhabitants. He described the post-amnesty program as "bribing a few thugs" and "giving alms to the youth." He denounced as "preposterous" the GON's definition of "oil producing communities" which, he claimed, would treat communities in northern states through which the pipelines to the Kaduna Refinery pass as "oil producing communities." The announcement ended with threats to the oil companies, claiming that the Joint Task Force (JTF) cannot protect them.

¶3. (C) Niger Delta activist Tony Uranta, known to have close ties to Okah, stressed to us on February 1 that "all fighters" were behind the MEND announcement because they "now know they've been deceived yet again by the federal government of Nigeria." However, Ijaw Youth Council President Dr. Chris Ekiyor told PolOff February 2 that only one faction was actually behind the announcement and "we are keeping it under control" because "the country is too

fragile now." Allen Onyema of the Foundation for Ethnic Harmony in Nigeria (FEHN), with close ties to a variety of militant camps, described the statement by Jomo Gbomo as "lap-top militants trying to cause confusion using modern technology" and claimed Henry Okah was behind the statement. He insisted that despite disillusionment with the post-amnesty process so far, all major militant commanders such as "Tompolo," "Boyloaf," and "Ateke Tom" were not willing to take up arms again at this time.

¶4. (C) The Nigerian media reported that a Shell pipeline was "sabotaged" on January 30, but Shell Nigeria's Head of Corporate Security, Mark Cornell, told EconOff February 1 that no attack occurred on the Shell Trans Ramos pipeline as reported; he said a crew was excavating around the pipeline and it ruptured. Total Corporate Affairs Manager O.B. Haffner speculated that MEND was being opportunistic with their claims of sabotage to keep pressure on the leaders in Abuja.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: With oil prices and production rising, the pressure is off the GON to ensure peace in the Niger Delta while President Yar'Adua's absence means that the driving force behind the amnesty process is no longer active. There is complete stagnation with respect to post-amnesty programs and growing frustration on the part of Niger Delta activists, whether militant or not. The failure to hand over former presidential power to the

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ethnically Ijaw Vice President is fueling further discontent. While Jomo Gbomo's statement probably does not indicate a return to widespread violence in the short-term, it is another warning that the situation in the Niger Delta could deteriorate rapidly if the reconciliation process continues to drift. . END COMMENT.

¶6. (U) ConGen Lagos coordinated this cable with Embassy Abuja.
BLAIR